DATELINE NO. 77 MAY 5, 1976
ALICE RICHMAN SCHACHNER/NEW YORK

"THE MEMOIRS OF A CHAMPION KITE FLYER"
(VOICED PIECE, INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: AND NOW THE VOICE OF AMERICA PRESENTS ... DATELINE ... ANOTHER IN THE WEEKLY SERIES OF PROGRAMS ON PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. TODAY, OUR DATELINE IN NEW YORK CITY, WHERE, VOA CORRESPONDENT ALICE RICHMAN SCHACHNER -- ON A WINDY SPRING DAY -- STEPPED OUT OF TO ADMIRE THE SKILL OF A CHAMPION ... KITE FLYER ...

VOICE:

IT'S SPRINGTIME IN NEW YORK AND HIGH ABOVE THE CITY'S PARKS FLY WEIRD AND WONDERFUL KITES. THEY SOAR, THEY SPIN AND SOMETIMES, ALAS, THEY CRASH TO THE GROUND, NEVER TO RISE AGAIN. MOST KITE-FLYERS ARE RESIGNED TO THIS LAST POSSIBILITY. BUT NOT WILL YOLEN ... A GENTLEMAN WHO PROVES THAT ANYONE WHO THINKS THAT KITES ARE FOR THE YOUNG, BETTER THINK AGAIN. WILL YOLEN IS A 68-YEAR-OLD RETIRED JOURNALIST. HE HAS BEEN FLYING KITES FOR ABOUT 25 YEARS AND HE FULLY EXPECTS TO GO ON FLYING THEM FOREVER. HE SAYS THAT HE GOT INTO THE SPORT BY ACCIDENT. BUT EVER SINCE THEN IT HAS TAKEN OVER MORE AND MORE OF HIS LIFE:

TAPE: CUT ONE -- YOLEN

"WELL, IT HAS A CERTAIN MYSTIQUE ABOUT IT. THERE IS A FEELING OF GRATIFICATION WHEN YOU CAN GET ANYTHING UP IN THE AIR WITH YOUR EYES INTO THE SKIES AND YOUR FEET ON THE GROUND AND JUST A STRING GOING FROM YOU -- FROM YOUR HANDS -- GUIDING SOMETHING THAT'S MAYBE A THOUSAND FEET AWAY. THAT'S REAL SATISFACTION OF ALL THE SENSES, INCLUDING THE SPIRITUAL ONES."

VOICE: WILL YOLEN HAS WRITTEN THREE BOOKS ABOUT HIS FAVORITE SPORT. THE LATEST IS CALLED "THE COMPLETE BOOK OF KITES AND KITE FLYING." AND ALTHOUGH HE TAKES HIS SUBJECT QUITE SERIOUSLY HE WOULD RATHER TALK ABOUT THE YEARS OF FUN IT HAS GIVEN HIM. ONE OF HIS HAPPIEST MEMORIES REVOLVES AROUND A DUEL FOR THE WORLD'S CHAMPIONSHIP. IN 1959, HE TRAVELED TO INDIA TO ENGAGE THE MAHARAJAH OF BHARATPUR IN DEADLY COMBAT. THE INDIANS ARE THE GREATEST KITE FIGHTERS IN THE WORLD, MR. YOLEN SAID, AND THE PRINCE WAS A FORMIDABLE OPPONENT.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- YOLEN

"THE FIRST HUNDRED FEET OF HIS KITE STRING WAS GLAZED SO HE COULD CUT ME. I HAD A REGULAR STRING. BUT I WAS USING A LIGHT, NON-RIGID KITE AND I HAD ADAPTED A FISHING ROD AND REEL INSTEAD OF THE HAND-OVER-HAND REEL SO THAT I COULD MANEUVER VERY FAST. AND I FINALLY MANEUVERED HIM OVER A COPSE OF TREES. THERE WAS A DEATHLY STILLNESS IN THE AIR. AND HE DROVE AFTER ME BECAUSE HE HAD ME RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS HUNDRED FEET OF GLAZED STRING AND HE WAS GOING TO CUT ME RIGHT THEN AND THERE. BUT I SPUN MY KITE VERY FAST AND GOT RIGHT OUT FROM UNDER HIM. AND THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NO WIND IN THE AIR AT THE TIME. AND HIS KITE CRASHED INTO THE TREES AND WAS BROKEN UP. AND I WAS THE WINNER OF THE WORLD'S CHAMPIONSHIP."

VOICE: MR. YOLEN'S BOOK IS FILLED WITH FASCINATING FACTS AND LEGENDS. HE TRACES THE ORIGINS OF KITING TO ANCIENT CHINA; NOTES THAT THE INVENTOR MARCONI SENT THE FIRST WIRELESS ANTENNA UP ON A KITE; AND HE RECORDS THE FACT THAT THE FIRST LINE OF BRIDGE-BUILDING CABLE TO SPAN THE GORGE OF NIAGARA FALLS WAS CARRIED ACROSS BY A YOUNG BOY'S KITE. ALTHOUGH THE CHAMPION

VOICE:
(CONT'D) PREFERS TO KEEP HIS OWN FEET ON THE GROUND HE CAN READILY UNDERSTAND THE ATTRACTION OF KITE RIDING AND GLIDING. HE THINKS THIS EXCITING AND DANGEROUS HOBBY HAS A GREAT FUTURE FOR THE YOUNG AND DARING. BUT FOR HIS PART, HE SAID: "I DO NOT WANT TO BE THE BRAVEST KITE FLYER: I WANT TO BE THE OLDEST."

FOR THOSE WHO ENJOY A LITTLE "ACTION" MR. YOLEN RECOMMENDS KITE FISHING. THIS IS DONE BY ATTACHING BAIT ABOUT HALF-WAY UP THE KITE STRING AND DRAGGING IT THROUGH THE WATER. WHEN THE FISH BITES, THE TRICK IS TO REEL IN THE KITE WITHOUT LOSING THE FISH. FISHING WITH KITES GOES BACK TO ANTIQUITY. BUT IN PORTUGAL THEY USED THEM IN A DIFFERENT WAY:

TAPE: CUT THREE -- YOLEN

"THEY WOULD GO OUT ON SAIL AND EVERYDAY WHEN THEY FINISHED FISHING AT FOUR O'CLOCK THERE WAS NO SEA BREEZE FOR THEM TO COME BACK IN. BUT AN HOUR BEFORE THAT HAPPENED -- THEY KNEW THEIR WINDS VERY WELL -- THEY WOULD SEND UP A KITE THREE TO FOUR HUNDRED FEET INTO THE AIR ON A CURRENT THAT WAS GOING RIGHT BACK TO THE SHORE. AND THEY CAME IN ON THAT KITE BACK TO SHORE JUST BEFORE SUNSET."

VOICE: MR. YOLEN HAS A GREAT MANY IDEAS FOR DESIGNING AND MAKING KITES AND SOME OF THEM ARE QUITE COMPLICATED. REMEMBER, HE WARNS, KITES ARE MEANT TO LIFT THE SPIRIT, NOT TO CONFINE IT.

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- YOLEN

"THE SECRET OF KITE FLYING -- APART FROM KITE MAKING -- IS THE FACT THAT IF YOU CAN ASSEMBLE YOUR KITE QUICKLY AND BE UP IN THE AIR, THAT'S WHERE THE FUN IS. THERE'S ANOTHER GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO LOVE TO MAKE KITES BUT THEY

TAPE:
(CONT'D) ARE IN THE MINORITY. MOST PEOPLE LIKE TO FLY KITES. THEY DON'T HAVE THE SKILLS AND THEY DON'T HAVE THE PATIENCE TO MAKE THEM. SO I SUGGEST THAT THEY JUST GO OUT AND BUY A KITE IF THEY CAN'T MAKE IT. AND GO FLY A KITE."

VOICE: WILL YOLEN HAS FLOWN HIS KITES IN THE MIDDLE EAST, LATIN AMERICA AND THE FAR EAST. ON MAY 17TH, HE EMBARKS ON HIS FIRST TRIP TO THE SOVIET UNION. HE HAS NO KNOWLEDGE OF SOVIET KITE-FLYERS, BUT IS CERTAIN THERE MUST BE SOME AND HE IS EQUALLY CERTAIN THAT THEY WILL COME TO GREET HIM. THE WORLD'S CHAMPION KITE FLYER IS EAGER FOR HIS NEXT CHALLENGE.

ANNCR: YOU'VE BEEN LISTENING TO DATELINE, ANOTHER IN THE SERIES OF VOA PROGRAMS ABOUT PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT (AT THIS TIME) FOR ANOTHER ... DATELINE. THIS IS ----------.

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